1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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priest's brothers remarked that "the working people come only when it is time to eat." The priest also complained of this, as he had done at several other ceremonies. However, there were many more present than is usual, for my camera and the prospect of having a photograph taken which might later be obtained from me was a potent lure to these people. My assistant reported almost no workers present at these same rites after I had left India. The remainder of the ceremonies are performed as in the village, except that there is no procession of dancing men and women to lead the priest back into the village.

The attenuation of the ceremony and the relative non-participation of migrant industrial workers is not significantly the result of secularization. In spite of many interviews and casual discussions about the supernatural I found little evidence of decreased belief in the deities or the efficacy of rites. Also, many of these men occasionally returned to their villages for various festivals, and when I saw such men in their native villages I found their participation as ardent and regular as that of any villager.

In my view the most important cause of this attenuation of, and non-participation in, ceremonies is limited identification with the *bustee*, and there is evidence that this is the result of migration to industrial employment. The second most important cause of attenuation and non-participation is the time demands of industrial employment.

Those who participate most regularly and fully have strong grounds for identifying with the *bustee*. Almost all are natives of Daredih. The two other regular and full participants include the only immigrant worker who has bought land in Daredih and a very early immigrant who has become assistant headman.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Chapter 5 The Extent of Hindu Absorption

The effects of migration to industrial employment thus far analyzed have been to accelerate the decline of Santal solidarity among the Santal generally and especially among Santal industrial workers. It has thus furthered the same tendency which the closure of the political rank path and the spread of the market and of increased wealth differences accelerated. Before moving on, it is useful to consider how much Hindu social absorption has accompanied this decline in solidarity.

Indian census material on religious identification is often cited as evidence of Hindu social absorption. Converting such figures on the southern Santal to percentages, the following table can be constructed. Conclusions from these figures, which indicate very little in the way of a trend, must be drawn with extreme caution.

My own field observations suggest that these figures do not reflect major changes in religious belief and practice. There are virtually no villages where half or even one-tenth of the Santal practice Hindu rituals distinct from the ritual practices of the other Santal residents, nor is there some sizable propor-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SANTAL RETURNED AS HINDU
(Census of India 1931)*

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Orissa	44	46	43	48
Chota Nagpur Feudatory States (Seraikela, Kharswan)		0	18	48
Singhbhum	16	3	56	23

tion of villages which follow distinctively Hindu religious practices. I have heard of only one Santal village within the territory occupied by the southern Santal which has abandoned traditional forms of worship and become thoroughly Hinduized. In 1916 Roy reported the conversion to Hinduism of a number of Santal in a Hindu village in Orissa; they were served by an outcast Brahman priest.[1] I met only one Santal who had taken up Hindu religious practices, and he lived in the city of Jamshedpur. Nowhere that I went were Santal served by Brahmans, though in some areas Santal families are occasionally visited by members of the Potkar caste, who bring messages from the dead for a fee. The Santal also employ females of various low Hindu castes to deliver their children and sometimes patronize Hindu practitioners of traditional medicine (*Kubraj*; Hindi).

It is true that until recently the Santal in large numbers took part, in their own way, in various Hindu festivals. At many of the major Hindu festivals the Santal would assemble for mixed dancing, and some would become possessed and speak

* More recent census figures do not contain this information because "caste has been abolished" as a legal entity.

[1] Roy, 1916.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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in the name of the Hindu deities invoked. Although this activity has recently been somewhat curtailed for reasons soon to be discussed, it is still possible to observe Santal worshipping Jugganath at the Cart Festival (*Rath Jatra*) in Baripoda, the capital of Mayurbhanj. Many Santal, even in villages where there are few Hindus, may also be seen immersing the Hindu Tusu goddess. In spite of these activities, in which most Santal have engaged, and even though all Santal ceremonies have some Hindu elements, almost all southern Santal have remained firmly attached to their own deities, and there have been no mass conversions.

The Indian government's figures on Hindu religious identification are largely an artifice of census methods, and since at least the 1920's, often of coercion as well. Culshaw, for example, commments that:

> The prevailing Indian identification of race with religion has caused some confusion in their [the Santals'] minds, but the fact that about 50 per cent of Santal were returned in 1931 as Hindus and most of the remainder as followers of tribal religion indicated the heightened political consciousness of the enumerators more than any real division within the tribe.[2]

Many Santal reported to me that they were pressured by local Hindu authorities to register themselves as Hindus. Others claimed that ignorance played a major role in the returns; the census-takers asked, "What is your religion?" (*Dhorom*; Oriya), and most Santal, it is said, did not understand this word. When it was explained they would reply "Santal religion," and the census-taker would then say, "That is your caste (*jāti*), not

[2] Culshaw 1949:15.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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your religion. Are you Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or what?" By this means the census-takers might obtain the desired result. However, it should be remembered that neither Culshaw, who is a Christian missionary, nor the presently very communally oriented Santal are disinterested observers.

There is no question that since the 1920's at least, Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj have actively campaigned to get tribals to declare themselves as Hindus. Such declarations were regarded as demonstrations of national unity and as refutations of the charge that India was so culturally and socially diverse as to be incapable of nationhood. In view of Hindu pressures and census irregularities, the returns reported may at the most indicate that Santals were finding it increasingly difficult to muster the solidarity to resist Hindu pressure for common religious identification. At the very least, the returns may simply reflect Hindu pressure generated by the Independence Movement.

In spite of the manifold pressures operating to weaken Santal solidarity, there are few cases of actual social absorption. Apparently, the endogenous forces contributing to solidarity have been sufficient to prevent this from happening. However, in view of the experience of other tribes and because of the increase in centrifugal pressures created by industrial employment, it appears that further social absorption was imminent. Certainly centrifugal pressures had increased, and if the political rank path had not suddenly reopened in the 1930's, it seems likely that the Santal would have become as Hinduized as their neighbors, the Bhumij.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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Chapter 7 The "Great Tradition"

177 One might say that the Santal have been in search of a "great
178 tradition" since the time that they conceded the social and
668 cultural superiority of their Hindu neighbors. Having taken much from these neighbors, but desirous of maintaining their identity, they decided to create a "great tradition" of their own rather than accept the one belonging to their neighbors.
[212] There is, for example, an attempt to codify Santal traditions in writing and even the development of a distinctive script in
• [771] which to record these traditions. In place of an essentially inexplicit religious ideology expressed in ritual, there is the development of an explicit religious ideology with an emphasis on morality. There is also the elaboration of literary forms wholly unlike the unpretentious traditional ones. Paradoxically, while these developments involve rejection of numerous Hindu practices, they introduce fundamental beliefs and values of Hinduism which previously had made hardly any progress among the Santal. Thus, while distinctive traits are re-emphasized, the configurations and orientation of Santal culture become somewhat more like those of the Hindus. However,

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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innovative patterns are also arising, particularly through the fusing of traditional and Hindu patterns.

I do not want to portray this striking cultural development as more profane than it is by giving undue emphasis to its connections with political objectives and pursuit of rank. Nevertheless, one must begin by recognizing that this is its source. As very grossly advocated by a somewhat naïve Santal industrial worker who has become a "Member of the Legislative Assembly," the movement is spoken of in the following terms: "We should not leave our religion; we should continue to use rice beer; we should have our worship at the Sacred Grove; also we should not stop eating beef. If we stop eating it our Santal caste will be gone. We will call our religion *Sarna Dhorom** and will tell everyone that our religion is *Sarna Dhorom*." Another Santal entered the conversation saying, "Yes, like Mussulman *Dhorom*, Christian *Dhorom*, so we will call ours *Sarna Dhorom*." A third Santal said, "Yes, if we say *Santal Dhorom*, that is our caste; as the Christians have a church, so our 'temple' (*mandir*; Hindi) is the Sacred Grove." The MLA brought the conversation to a close and down to "practical" matters by saying: "We will maintain our 'drama club'; we will keep our 'culture'; if we keep our 'culture' the government will give us money; if you do a drama I will bring big officers of the Jharkhand party to see."

There are sections of Jharkhand political rallies with such a concentration on culture that one might imagine himself at a festival rather than a political meeting. The local club may perform a play at such a meeting; traditional dances may be

* *Sarna* is the Munda word for "Sacred Grove" (*Jaher* in Santali); *Dhorom* is the Oriya form meaning roughly "religion."

The Santal

177 Millet we never get.
178 Day by day we starve and become desiccated, *haeri*.
539 Dirty grass huts, poverty, and sickness cause us to moan, *haeri*.
668 Continuous sickness follows us all our life.
Who will cure this?

Marań Buru is like an *ojha* [medicine man in Santali and Hindi]
He will end this sickness.
Let us drive out this evil by applying our intelligence.
Let us drive it out with our sacred prayers.
This religion will wipe away the sin.
With the help of religion let us bid this evil go.
Then we will obtain heaven's reward, god-given love and joy.
Through religion the poverty and sickness of hell will vanish.

This last song in particular is interspersed with Oriya and [177] Sanskritic words. It also introduces heaven and hell, neither of which has a place in the traditional religion; but Marań Buru, the tribal deity of the Santal, retains his place, and leaders of the Jharkhand political movement are prominent.

The shame which the elite leaders feel for the traditional "pleasure" orientation is expressed in the following song:

After drinking rice beer,
After getting drunk,
A man walks with his *ăhoti* falling to the ground.
Seeing all these bad things the aboriginal brother becomes sorrowful.

177 There are several reasons why the traditional "pleasure"
178 orientation is opposed. As already suggested, it is an attribute
181 of low status in the prevailing system of caste ranking, and
668 the elite have internalized a distaste for it, especially for its

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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538 The great task that Semlet' hopes soon to undertake, and for
668 which money is being collected, is to provide an authoritative text of Santal tradition written in the new script. At periodic Semlet' meetings one may observe eloquent representations of the cultural movement and its intimate connection with solidarity and the political rank path.

178 In place of traditional prayers such as: "Greetings, *Marañ*
539 *Buru*; in the name of this festival I offer you so do not allow
668 any sickness, headache, or stomach ache to come. We give to
782 you that we may remain in good health," one hears prayers more in keeping with an emergent "Great Tradition" such as the following: "Greetings, *Marañ Buru*; be kind enough and pleased to accept my bowing and greeting. I prostrate myself before you and direct my attention to you. Come down as the wind and fly like a storm. Guide me in the path of righteousness. I bow down in all directions."

668 The following excerpts from typical speeches at Semlet'
539 meetings give an "inside view" of the cultural movement and
771 its social significance:

> In one village people stopped worshipping in the Sacred Grove and began to follow a Hindu sect which makes no offerings but only prays. Within three years they fell ill in every house. . . . Some "medicine man" from another village told them it is because you stopped worshipping in the Sacred Grove, so they returned to their old ways. Other people's religions will not make us strong. We should worship properly, then we can raise our religion so many will respect it.

> In ancient times it was said, and our "aboriginal" leaders also say, Sārna is our religion. The *diku* say our religion is Hindu. Then

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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668 539 971 what is our religion? If we celebrate with Hindus then we will soon be marrying them.

We will search out our traditions and publish our "precepts" [*bidhan* = precepts; Hindi]. . . . Many people are ashamed to "*Johar*" [a Santal greeting used for both persons and deities] at the Sacred Grove for fear the *dikus* will see. If we do not believe in our religion we will become Hindu or Christian. Now the *dikus* are trying to lure us away from our religion, so we must follow our Semlet' and all Santal will follow. We have to raise ourselves by religion and worshipping at the Sacred Grove. If we do not raise and support our religion we shall not progress in the "socio-political" [*somaj rajnita*; Hindi] sphere. This Semlet' is not different than the traditional religion. In the village of X, 300 people gathered for Semlet'; at that time an SDO [Sub-Divisional Officer] also came and that *diku* said, "this religion is not bad, it is a good thing."

Now we should rise like other people. The traditional religion is good but now we are following others' religion. We have no feeling for our caste and religion and that is why others are in high positions. If we have no unity and organization then others will have no respect for our caste. . . . Bihar police arrested twelve men for religious work. Now also they don't allow us to do religious work, but we must maintain our cow sacrifice at the Sacred Grove. Literacy and knowledge can help maintain our religion. When we spoke with the police who arrested the Santal they asked us for a written record of our religion. Then I said you can go village to village and ask people. Others drive hundreds and hundreds of cattle down the road and slaughter them and the police don't stop them. We sacrifice a cow every five years. This is our religion offering to Cando. . . . Other people try to destroy our religion but nobody should destroy any religion. I have seen in the constitution of India in the 25th chapter that no one shall be allowed to destroy a re-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 539 771 ligion. . . . Some literate people also are leading us in a bad direction. In eating and clothing we often follow the *diku* way; we are departing from the way of our own society.

177 178 796 The final cultural manifestation to be discussed brings us back to the Durga Puja anecdote with which this chapter began. In the spirit of solidarity every effort is being made to prevent attendance at and participation in Hindu ceremonies. One of the dangers inherent in attendance and participation is the emulation of Hindu ways and the development of Hindu identification. The second danger stems from the manner of Santal participation, i.e., the Santal tendency to engage in mixed dancing, to become drunk, and in general to publicly display those forms of "pleasure" which are the attributes of low rank. The third danger bears a resemblance to the objection voiced by the city Santal, Mr. F., that the Santal are cheated by the clever *dikus*. No doubt there is some cheating, but what is really objectionable is that on such occasions considerable money is spent on "pleasure" and is thus not available for the serious business of rank improvement.

184 668 796 A more positive attempt to increase solidarity is the recent effort to get all Santal villages to celebrate their festivals simultaneously and to set the dates for such occasions so that they will not cointide with Hindu ceremonies. This effort has had a limited success in Mayurbhanj but has not been adopted generally because (1) the traditionally important visiting and reciprocity made possible by non-simultaneous ceremonies would have to be sacrificed, and (2) industrial workers now attending those of their own festivals which are held at the same time as Hindu ones on "free time" (permissible leave periods during which they are paid) would have to take leave without pay or forego all ceremonies. In principle, however,

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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The Hindu "Kamar" does work for them, the "Kumhars" make their pots and plates, the "Tantis" weave their clothes and some other depressed class Hindus mostly live within their localities. The influence of the Hindus living nearby saturates the thoughts and ideas of the Santals, and when we remember that ethnologically many of these Hindus were aboriginals in origin, we can find out the reasons why many Santals are really anxious to describe themselves as Hindus like their neighbours. In their rural settlements, one can find the Santals joining the worship of the Hindu gods and goddesses like Durga, Kali and Mahadev. Like the rest of the Hindus, they salute these deities and the entire tribe dance and amuse themselves during these ceremonies.

Population

A recent worker on the Tribal Demography in India[1] regrets that the data on the tribals are the most inaccurate of all gathered together in Census reports. The net effect, he says, is to understate the number of tribals and correspondingly to overstate the number of other groups.

I. Singh, in his *Development and Adibasis*, in Asian Labour, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Jan. 1950) says, "Adibasis...number not less than 30 millions accord-

1 *Tribal Demography in India* by C. B. Mamoria, p. 24.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

162 857,030. They are by far the largest number of aboriginal tribes and exceed in number all the Hindu castes except the Brahmins and the Gowalas.[1] They populate the Santal Parganas very thickly, where more than one person out of every three is a Santal. Over the province as a whole there has been an addition of 234,662 (or about 16 per cent) to the total number enumerated at the last Census.[2]

The numerical strength of the Santals in Bihar and Orissa, according to the Census Report 1931, will be clear from the following comparative figures with the other tribes in the same province:—

Ho	...	523,158
Kharia	...	146,037
Khond	...	315,709
Munda	...	549,764
Oraon	...	637,112
Santal	...	1,712,133

162 771 So far as the religion of the Santals is concerned, the Census returns in Bihar and Orissa (1931) showed 586,499 persons (293,807 males and 292,692 females) as Hindu Santals. The Christian Santals were returned at a total number of 13,279 (males 6,754 and females 6,525); whereas, those

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1 This is compiled from the *Census Reports of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, 1931.

2 Ref. *Census Report*, Bihar and Orissa, 1931, p. 294.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

following tribal religions numbered 1,112,355 (males 554,542 and females 557,813).

As regards literacy, the Census Report of 1931 records that out of a population of 1,304,034 Santals over seven years of age, Bihar and Orissa contained 8,899 literates. Coming to the Santal Parganas, the important Santal habitat, we find that there were in 1931 only 3,490 literate Santals.

Feudatory States

The total Santal population of the Feudatory States in Bihar and Orissa, according to the Census of 1931, is 309,504. (Census Report 1931, Bengal and Sikkim).

In Mayurbhanj, they constitute a little over 29 per cent of the population, their total strength according to the Census of 1931 was 258,195 (127,365 males and 130,830 females). Out of them 254,596 were returned as Hindus, 3,488 Animists and 111 Christians.

As regards the variations in the Santal population in Mayurbhanj, it may be stated that the Santals numbered 91,490 in 1891. "In 1901, they numbered 185,149 which is more than double the previous figure. A further increase by more than 15 per cent in their number occurred in the Census of 1911, when they numbered 214,164. In the succeeding Census of 1921, the rate of

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Bengal

So far as Bengal is concerned, the Santals numbered 712,040 in 1921, but increased by 11·9 per cent to 796,656 in 1931. Thus while in 1891, the Santals formed 7·77 per cent per mille of the total population, in 1901 the number rose to 12·33, in 1911 to 14·45 and in 1931 it came upto 15·56. In regard to their religion, it is noticeable that while in 1921 only 158,383 were returned as Hindus and 553,657 under tribal religions, the Census figures of 1931 returned 433,502 as Hindu Santals and 352,386 as following tribal religions. The result is seen in an increase of Hindu Santals from 22·2 per cent of the total to almost 54·5 per cent. This phenomenal increase of Hindu Santals is explained as due to the missionary activities of the Hindu Mission and the natural increase in the number of Hindus in the tribe.

As regards literacy, the ratio (according to the Census of 1931) stands at 9 literates per 1,000 of the same age and sex above 7 years of age, there being 3 literates in English per 10,000 of the same age and sex.

We quote below the following table from the Census Report of 1931 (Bengal and Sikkim) showing the locality, actual number of Santals in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from 1901 to 1931 and the per-

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

other tribes resident in the areas. It is a very difficult but fascinating task to find out which of them are typically Santal and which borrowed, as culture-loans from the neighbouring tribes, either Muṇḍà or hinduised Aboriginals.

This material aspect of Santal life is indissolubly linked up with its religious and clan features. We shall see in the forthcoming pages how the Santals invoke their gods to bless them with bumper-crops, how they seek protection for their hunting-dogs and cattle from the attack of wild animals by prayers to the deities. Thus the communal worship of the tribe has for its object the securing of good luck and avoiding bad luck for the tribe as its material background.

St Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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CHAPTER VII

FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

121 If at any moment mankind has thought and felt that there must be "more things in heaven and earth" than dreamt of by one's philosophy, it is at the cross roads of life, such as births, marriages and deaths. Whence comes this life, by what ceremonials will the married couple's life progress to their mutual well-being and, as members of the big human society, by what processes can we on earth ensure the peace, if not the happiness, of the departed spirit? These are questions that have deeply affected human thought, civilized or uncivilized. It is to tackle these problems that the Santals have recourse to elaborate ceremonials, to bring luck to them, and to propitiate their gods and goddesses, so that the malevolent powers may be shorn of their malign influence and the benevolent may protect them.

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In the next few pages, we propose to deal with the ceremonies as observed by the Santals to ward off unknown dangers, and to feel at ease that something has been done to propitiate the deities.

844 *Birth*

When a baby is coming to a Santal family, no new shed is erected as a lying-in room, but any

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

585 182 783 want to purify the couple from the evil effects of chance pre-marital sex-connections (a rare phenomenon with educated Santals), thereby neutralising the dangers to the family and the tribe.

585 179 182 Many of these ceremonials are closely analogous to Hindu practices; and have probably been borrowed and are thus due to culture contact, although it is not improbable that the Hindus themselves might have at an early period assimilated some similar Pre-Dravidian practices. Whatever that may be, one must

585 182 771 notice that Santal marriages are closely associated with religion as is indicated by offering of vermilion to *Maran Buru* and a goat to the dead ancestors. Thus we find that marriage no longer remains a civil contract of getting a partner in life on payment of a price, but takes the form of a sacrament as well.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES

764 The Santals have their own funeral customs. When a death takes place in the tribe, the village Headman and the elders flock together at the house in mourning, when they rub the dead body with oil and turmeric. Now, the corpse is taken out of the house in a *khatia* (a stringed bed-stead), placed in the yard and cleansed with cow-dung and water. A handful of paddy is spread over the spot and some thrust into the right palm of the deceased and thrown down some time later. The bier is next

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

Religion of the Santals

In the foregoing pages we have noticed the various classes of Santal deities. The question now naturally arises if the religious practices of the Santals are not some form of an active worship of some deities and lesser spirits, together with a vague belief in souls and a future existence connoted by the term 'Animism.' One is puzzled to think, as Risley was, as to what is the exact idea of the Santal when he thinks about the spirits, say of the hills. Is it a reverence for the spirit of the flesh? Does he think he is in danger of being ruined by it? Risley says, "No." According to him, when a Santal thinks of a tiger-spirit, he does so from the "vague dread of a mysterious tiger-power or tiger-demon, the essence and archetype of all tigers, whose vengeance no man.....could hope to escape."[1]

But it must be noted, however, that the conception of abstract power in itself independent of a material vehicle, is difficult for the aboriginal mind. Thus, to the Santal, *Thàkur Jiu* or *Dhòròm* is not an abstract conception, but a real entity, with feelings and desires akin to those of man. For his Ancestor Spirits in particular, he exhibits filial devotion which may be likened to the Hindu

1 Risley, *People of India*, page 225.

3s Mukherjee O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

worship of the *Pitris*. That is a religion not of undiluted fear in the presence of the mysterious powers of the dark.

The very name of the Supreme Deity connotes a moral order of things. In ancestor-worship, in endearing terms of primary human-relationships as "Basumata," we find something that removes the Santals steps higher than the animists. That emotion and thrill play a conspicuous part in the religious practices of the Santals, cannot for a moment be doubted by the person who has observed them with an eye to see. It may be that they have borrowed these from the Hindus. But even as Pre-Dravidian practices have been digested and assimilated beyond recognition by the Hindus, these ideas, even if borrowed, have been for a long time past, the religious life and blood of the tribe.

So it is that the latest Census reports have given up the term 'Animism' in describing the religion of the Santals, and for want of a better expression we should characterise it as "Spiritism" a term used by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, in designating the religion of the Khariss, a Munda tribe.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

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CHAPTER X

MAGIC AND WITCH-CRAFT

In course of the previous chapter, we have given the reader some idea as to how the Santal mind reacts in the presence of the mysteries of life. We have seen that they have elaborate rituals to propitiate the deities, with whom they people this world. In the present chapter, we shall see how they deal with the super-normal phenomena. That "there are more things in heaven and earth" than is dreamt of in one's philosophy is the conclusion of puzzled humanity at large, and the Santals have their own special methods of dealing with them by magical practices.

To Remove Drought

When there is a drought, and the agricultural well-being of the tribe is thus threatened, several Santal villages combine together and subscribe funds for the propitiation of *Sima Bongas* (the boundary deities). Some men fall in a trance. These men, inspired with oracular powers, are requested to state reasons for the calamity that has befallen the tribe and to suggest remedies. Generally, the tribal troubles are hinted by those who impersonate the invisible gods, and solemn assurances are held out

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1002
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Mònṛènkoko ruia ḍhelka ḍemba
Ja Gosane, turuikoko naranaka sakaa.

(Translation)

(Men) The Fives are five brothers.
(Women) O, the six goddesses* are six sisters.
(Men) The fives beat on broad *demba* (musical instruments).
(Women) O, the six goddesses blow on horns.

128 77 533 539 [538]

We think that here we may usefully quote a song reflecting reformist ideas so far as Santal religious practices are concerned. It is not definitely known if a Christian idea or the Sapha Hòṛ philosophy is being given expression to in the following lines, but anyhow we smell something new:

Num rakap kate naṛka sapha kate,
Dhòròm mundil teñ bòlòyena,
Dhòròm mundilrè bòlò kate dhòròm puthi yiñ parhaolet,
Hòrak dhòròmho ruaṛèna.

(Translation)

A man is presumably speaking to himself:
After bath and washing my hair with (the soapy) mud,

* The six goddesses are named, Dangi, Pungi, Hisi, Dumni, Chita and Kapra. They are all wives of Mònrènko (the Fives).

St Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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I entered the temple.
There I read the scriptures
And realised that the religion of the Santals has come back.

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We would like to conclude this review with a lesson conveyed by a folk-song :|

Sojhe hòrdò Nupàl kucit giya,
Ḍhili sili Nupàl balañ taṛam
Etòm koye Nupàl jànum jhànṭi
Janhan lekatèlañ bàkuk' kòk'a.

(Translation)

The straight road is narrow, O Nupal!
We must not walk carelessly, O Nupal!
To its right and left are fences of thorns, O Nupal!
By chance thorns may prick us.

Santal Dances

535

Here we intend to mark in some detail, the various Santal dances, their nature and characteristics. These dances are mostly executed by men and women together, although, as we shall soon see, there are special ones reserved for either of the sexes. The Santals have special seasons and festivals for these dances and these are a part and parcel of the tribal religious life.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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I saw not—cared not for the light,
That leads the blind to heaven.

Such a disillusionment perhaps lay in the subconscious mind of an educated Santal lad of Mayurbhanj, who asked us pathetically, "Please tell me if we have any religion."

This should be studied in the background of deeper moorings in the heart of the Santals as a result of centuries of culture-contact with the rest of the population, mostly Hindus. We have already seen that these tribals have mostly lived not in watertight compartments, but cheek by jowl with the rest of the more civilised people of India. So slowly and imperceptibly, acculturation has been going on.

One carefully traversing through the Santal myths and tradition comes to the inevitable conclusion that for ages and ages they have tried to form a part of the Hindu society. Use of vermilion during marriage, wearing of *alta* marks on the feet of women, characterising the Supreme deity as Thakur Jiu, obeservance of festivals like Charak (Pata—the hook-swinging festival), the strange resemblance of some Santal dances with the *Rasa* dance as described in the Vishnu Purana, the singing of essentially Vaishnava songs during the *Sohrae*, the shouting of *Haribol* during marriage, funeral and other ceremonies, the worship of Durga in Mohul-

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CHAPTER IV

RELIGION

Ceremonies and Festivals

The proper analysis of the religion of the Santals is as difficult as it is necessary for the history of succession of religious ideas in India and perhaps in the whole world. If there is any culture which still carries on the impress of the underlying philosophic speculation and order of thought that was widespread in India prior to the rise of the Dravidian culture, it was very likely the belief and social order of the Pre-Dravidian Santals.

In the study of the hypothetical development of religious ideas, the Santals figure prominently in the scheme of evolution. Thus Clodd cites them as an example of beliefs proceeding animism. He says :

'This is very interesting considering the sway of the ideas of impersonal universal spirit or mana so widely prevalent amongst the Austric-speaking people of which the Santals are a western peripheral branch. It is a subject for future enquiry, whether there had been any influence of Vedic or Upanishadic speculations of the universal supreme energy carried by these people in the migration eastward. There is a calling back of the shade of the departed common amongst those pre-Dravidian tribes of Chota-Nagpur which recalls the Vedic passages (Rigveda, Mandal 10)'.

The enquiries of Pater W. Schmidt, probably inspired by the subconscious Christian idea of an early revelation to primitive man of the idea of a supreme personal god, have led to the finding of many instances of the primitive high god in the first cultural strata of

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114 food-gatherers. The Santals fall in the category of the
77 primary or secondary cultural strata in the scheme of
194 Pater Schmidt. The idea of a supreme being or a
191 personal high god is well known amongst the primitive tribes of Central Provinces, Chota-Nagpur and Assam Thus according to Dalton, he is called Boro by the Kharias, Ote Boram or Sing Bonga by the Hos, Dula Deb or Pharsi Pen by the Gonds, Bura Penu or Bela Penu by the Khonds. In Assam, he is known as the Father by the Abors, as old bearded Rishi Salgong residing in heaven by the Garos, as the creator Pa-thian amongst the Kukis and the great god Arnam Kethe amongst the Mikirs. The enquiries of Sir James Frazer in his "Worship of Nature" have led him to cite most of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as devotees of the Sun god as the supreme being. Rai Bahadur S C. Roy thus has analysed the Dharmes or Biri Bela of the Oraons as Sun god. Similarly, according to him, the Ber Pitia or Ber Chichha of the Mulers is the Sun god and so also is the Bhagavan of the Korwas. The Bur a Penu of the Khonds is also the God of light.

114 Coming now to the Santals we find almost all the
77 authorities agreeing in conceding to them the idea of
196 a supreme being. But there is a great diversity of
194 opinion as to what he is called. According to Dalton, he is Sing Bonga amongst the Santals of Chota-Nagpur, Risley (Appendix VII, p. 446, People of India), on the authority of Skrefsurd, says that the supreme deity is called Thakur. E.G. Man, working in Orissa about fifty years ago, gives (Santhal and Santhalia, Chapter VI) the name of the supreme being of the Santals as Chando or Chando Bonga. Bompass (P. 402, Folklore of the Santal Parganas) in one of his folklores

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describes that Thakur Baba had made everything very convenient for mankind, etc. Rev. Bodding, who is the most recent and exhaustive worker on Santal beliefs and customs specially in the Mohulpaharia area in Santal Parganas, gives the name as Chando, 'the creator, the only one who gives and restores life' (Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore). Bodding further says that this name is often confounded with Cando the Sun. My own personal enquiries in the villages in Katikund within Dumka Damin and in the village on the base of the Zalway Hill, in Deoghar Sub-division, in the year 1934, elicited the information that the general name for God is Kando and the name for the Sun in that area is Sin Kando and for the moon Ninda Kando.

The Santal lives in harmony with the surroundings, having no temple and stooping to no idol made by his hand for the purpose of worship. It may be said that the Santal lives like a child of nature in rapport with all his surroundings, the hill, the dale, the spring or the grove being the objects of his reverential fear. They are the abodes of a supreme supernatural energy or the departmental spirits or the bongas. The bongas are friendly beings at times, but most often mischievous and naughty elves playing mischievous pranks with men, bringing them trouble and causing misery at times. These bongas are supposed at times to harass humanity, to eat people (as the Santals express it) because they are hungry, displeased, hurt or envious, and this eating is the devouring of health and substance of the person exposed to the displeasure of the spirits. The spirits may further be used by, or themselves use, the witches as medium.

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771 782 796 Thus in religion proper the main attitude of Santal Society towards the supernatural, is one of reverential fear in the presence of certain mysterious supernatural powers and beings and dependence on and propitiation to and prayerful submission to them, and the result expected is the averting of the ill-will and securing the good will of the supernatural beings and good luck to man in crops and cattle, health and progeny.

771 776 778 782 [784] The Santal religion is also not a little concerned with ancestral and certain other disembodied souls and Nature-spirits and deities. The rites employed to establish relations with them are mainly supplications and prayers, offerings of sacrifices and the ceremonial sharing of sacrificial food besides certain special observances and taboos.

771 [754] [796] The Santal believe that the supernatural influence is not often inimical and evil. Their idea is that there is no possibility of malevolent influence being turned to a benevolent or good one, the only practical question for them is how to stop it and, in the case of witches, how to stop and punish it. Bongas and witches know how to do evil to people but more often than not also how to do them good.

771 829 [182] The Santal religion in its social aspect is essentially a tribal matter and has helped to strengthen the social unity and quicken the sense of social responsibility, and his concept of righteousness is bound up with his social or tribal consciousness. As the Santal Society has not yet got much beyond a limited tribal consciousness his conception of righteousness is not concerned with the essential or absolute standard of righteousness of things.

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One of the aspects of Santal religion which could be more observed today in the social side rather than any religious belief and ceremonial, is the definite association of some of the exogamous clans and sub-clans with names of plants, trees and some animals, generally termed as totemism. Thus of the total of twelve clans nine are totemic and of the seventy-four sub-clans twenty-two are totemic, which are as follows :

Clans	Totems	Clans	Totems
Besra	Hawk	Hasdak	Wild-goose
Hembram	Betat-palm[1]	Marndi	Grass
Murmu	Nilgai	Saren	Constellation Pleiades
Pauria	Pigeon	Chore	Lizard
Bedea	Sheep		

Sub-Clans	Totems	Sub-Clans	Totems
Kahu	Crow	Kara	Buffalo
Chilbindha	Eagle-slayer	Jihu	Bird
Gua	Areca-nut	Kachua	Tortoise
Nag.	Cobra	Somal	Deer
Buru. birit.	Hill	Kekra	Crab
Roht.	Panjaun tree	Bear	Fish
Ganr.	Fort	Handi	Earthen-vessel
Sikiya	Chain	Barchi	Spear-men.
Mundu or Badar	Dense Jungle	Sidup	Bundle of straw
Agaria	Charcoal-burner	Dantela	Breed pigs with large tusks for sacrificial purposes.
Lat	Bake meat in a leaf platter.		
Reh-Lutur.	Ear-pierced.		

1 [Erratum: this should read "Betel-palm." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

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614 None of these appear to be associated with the idea of culture heroes as amongst the Amerindians. [538] The folk-lore shows indeed some stories centering round the plants (betel-palm, Panjaun tree, Sabai grass) and animals (tiger, jackal, leopard, crab). Besides these some of the clans' names centre round industrial objects and articles of usefulness such as chain earthen vessel, etc. These would be more in line with a belief in objects possessing mana and venerated as such and gradually getting associated with exogamous subdivisions which might have had a hand in the invention or diffusion of those useful objects. There is no [796] seasonal recurring ceremonial round these objects meant for the preservation or propogation of the animals or plants venerated as ancestors, as in Australia. There [784] is indeed some taboo in the use by the particular subclan of the plant and animal venerated as its ancestor. The animal and plant thus venerated are taboo to the clans; none can hunt it, nor can they partake of its flesh. But because of the observation of this taboo the Santals are in no sense plant and animal worshippers. [796] It seems that their idea of bongas inhabiting all creeks and corners of nature, has been extended only to the region of certain animals and plants. In the folklore [773] the bongas are generally represented as using seats of [825] hooded cobras and certain serpents are naturally vene- [262] rated as clan-ancestors; on the other hand, the common water-snake (Dhamna) is eaten by almost all the Santals. Of the animals not eaten by the Santals all are not associated with clan-names such as the Frog, Gibbon, Elephant, Dog, etc.

771 If the religion of the Santals may thus be described 776 as veneration of a Supreme Being and reverential awe

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or fear of certain good or evil spirits surrounding him, his practical life may be said to centre round certain other pseudo-scientific or magical rites and ceremonies. He is constantly trying to dodge, control or press into service the innumerable mischievous spirits (bongas, etc.) and forces (tejo, etc.) that bring all the misery and disaster in life.

Thus in magic, the attitude of the Santal is mainly one of the defiance of control and domination over unseeen mysterious powers and the result intended is the expulsion of evil or compulsion of natural or supernatural forces and powers in the production of desired favourable conditions or results. The Santal magic referred to above, is primarily concerned with mysterious impersonal forces and powers residing mostly in natural or artificial objects and the instruments employed in dealing with them are principally charms and spells, adjurations and incantations as also certain traditional observances and taboos.

As has been beautifully and lucidly explained by Rai Bahadur Roy in the case of the Oraons, the Santals attitude to religion and magic is not mutually exclusive but complementary and supplementary. His magical practices are the result or part of his science and constitute his applied pseudo-science. They never crowd out those simple religious rites of veneration to and propitiation of, the mysterious author of our being. But whereas in the daily affairs of life of the civilized man the scientific physician is at hand, the Santal, like other primitive people, has recourse to his Medicine-man and Bonga-doctor. These latter come with their

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elements have doubtless modified its practice among the Santals

Christian influence. In 1862 the Church missionary society started work in the Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions and they built a colony for their converts in the Western Duars (in Godda). The Scandinavian Mission started their missionary activities in the Dumka subdivision in 1867. In 1884 the American Methodist Episcopal Mission started work in the Pakur subdivision. Other missions were the Christian Women's Board of Missions, a Wesleyan mission, which started work at Deoghar subdivision.

Thus it can be seen that after the Santal rebellion several Christian missions started their activities in and outside the Santal Parganas. It is stated in the Seventy fifth annual report of the Santal mission of Northern Churches (1941) that 25,000 Santals were converted. The record of missionaries has been a very creditable one in some respects, particularly in regard to education, sanitation, medical care and general raising of the standard of living, but in context of religion the missionary zeal has been somewhat misdirected. These converts are cut off from any activity that savours of worship of tribal *Bongas*. They do not contribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with village festivals. They do not take part in the worship of the five deities of the Jaherasthan.

The converted Santals and even some non-Santals refer to Adam and Eve as *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Burhi* who according to the tradition of the tribal Santals are the parents of mankind and the human race

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797 sprang from this pair. Also they correlate *Maran Buru*
797 with 'Satan'. They believe that *Maran Buru* spoiled
177 the first human pair and revealed to them the secret of sexual intercourse, just like the Christian who believe that Satan is responsible for the downfall of the first pair, Adam and Eve. The converted Santals observe the Christmas Day and Good Friday. Harvest Festivals are celebrated by decorating Churches and offering prayers.

795 **Effect on the Social Culture of the Santals due to alien**
797 **influence.** The social system of the Santal is communistic
177 in nature. In any festival, or ceremony the whole
181 village takes part. This cohesion is now losing its
184 strength. For this, missionary activities are to a certain extent responsible. The Christian converts are being cut off from social intercourse. Sometime a christian family is put to great inconvenience. This is particularly the case when a death occurs for the non-christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of the dead body. The non-christian method of disposing the dead body is by cremation whereas the converted Santals practise burial and subsequent mourning and funeral ceremonies according to the Christian way. There is no bar to marrying more than one wife in Santal tribal custom. But this practice is strictly prohibited among Christian Santals as Christian religion strictly prohibits *bigamy*. Cross cousin marriage, and marriage with non-Santals is not tolerated by the tribal Santals but among Christian Santals, these things are not prohibited.

The marriage ceremony is held either in the Church or in the courtyards of the house of the bride's parents

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different kinds of rice fields are Bengali. Maize, a cereal that is important in their economy, has a borrowed name, but other lesser cereals retain their Santali names. In Bankura the Santals have lost the use of their own numerals beyond seven, though apparently these are known and commonly used elsewhere. Even so, in Bankura the Santal word for "twelve" is still used in phrases connected with the recital of tribal traditions, as in the phrase *gelbar paris*, meaning the "twelve clans". Iron has a Santali name, but other metals now in use, such as lead, copper and brass, have Bengali names. In addition to brass and earthenware utensils, the Santals make extensive use of the leaves of the *sal* tree (Santali *sarjom*), which they plait to form many varieties of plates, cups, pipes and cigarettes, and they possess a wide vocabulary to distinguish between the different kinds. Brass and earthen pots they buy from others.[1]

The difficulties of determining the extent of their borrowings in the field of religion may be illustrated by the fact that the language of spells and of prayers offered at the time of sacrificing contains a strong admixture of Hindi-Bengali words. This would seem to indicate that there have been many borrowings at this point; but it is also possible that the one who makes the prayers, wishing to put himself into a favourable relation with the spirits, uses a special vocabulary and so removes himself from the common run of his people when he is acting as a mediator between them and the spirit world. Many of the songs sung nowadays are composed in Bengali. There is a large stock of riddles, some of which are asked and answered in Santali, others of which are asked and answered in Bengali, while yet others make use of both languages.[2]

Only incidental reference has been made to the impact of Moslem culture on Santal life. Reminiscences occur of the period of Moslem rule, such as the following statement: "Concerning the *Turuk* (*Turuk*, or Turk, the name by which Santals refer to Moslems), it is said that they ruin our spirits because they cut the throats of fowls the wrong way. If we eat

[1] Another discussion of the linguistic evidence, giving many examples, and the whole stated from a somewhat different point of view, is to be found in Professor Sten Konow's introduction to Bodding's collection of Folk-Tales.

[2] In a suggestive article published in *Africa* for June 1946, Professor F. C. Bartlett has expanded his thesis in the Julian Huxley lecture of 1944 that each primitive culture displays both "hard" and "soft" points. The methods which he has outlined for determining, in the examination of any particular culture, what constitute the hard and soft points, and in particular the story method, may furnish valuable results when applied to the study of Santal culture.

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CHAPTER 7

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(1)

The Santal village is organized to secure the greatest possible degree of co-operation not only in temporal affairs but also in dealing with the spirit world. The relationship between Santal society and some part of the universe inhabited by spirits is very close, and it is maintained by the society acting through its representatives. One of the most important officials in the village is the *nacke*, or village priest, whose business it is to maintain right relationships with the tribal spirits. A priest who was once asked whether he really believed in his work replied without any hesitation: "If I did not do my work the whole village would become sick!" His answer provides in effect a true summary of the Santal conception of the priest's work. He is a man apart, and he is conscious of his separation from his fellows. Alone of all the village officials he is not appointed by his fellow villagers, but by the *bongas*, the spirits that are worshipped. The investing of a new priest with the necessary authority occurs during the ceremonies following the death of his predecessor. The spirits take possession of the designated individual and so establish the identity of the new priest beyond any possibility of doubt. The marks of possession, the result of the process known to the Santals as *rum*, are quite familiar. *Rum* is the regular method by which the spirits reveal their wishes, convey comfort or warning, and assure the living of their fellowship with the spirits of the tribe and with their ancestors. The behaviour of a person who is possessed is similar to that of one who has suffered a sudden onslaught of insanity, and he speaks in the character of the spirit who has for the time being taken possession of his personality.

In spite of the supernatural origin of the priestly office, one finds that the spirits in making an appointment have been actuated largely by common-sense considerations. They usually ensure that the eldest son of the deceased priest assumes his father's functions, or, failing him, perhaps they will appoint a brother. One may discern two reasons why the succession is secured in this manner. In the first place, a son will have had special opportunities of watching his father at work, and having been brought up in the right atmosphere he is already familiar with the rules and customs that govern the office. Secondly, when the original distribution of lands was made in the new village, the first *nacke*, in common with the other officials, received

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to leave. On one occasion I was informed that a woman had been killed as a suspected witch, but it was impossible to make a satisfactory investigation; and on another occasion I was asked to see the body of a young man where the villagers were convinced that witchcraft had been responsible for his death. It appeared to be a case of poisoning. Fortunately, some of the evidence relating to witchcraft and murder has been documented. Murder by Santals is comparatively rare, but fear of witchcraft is one of the most frequent motives at work. Statistics have been published for the Santal Parganas for the period 1931–40. During this period there were seventy-eight cases of homicide by Santals before the courts, and of the seventy-eight it was definitely established that sixteen were due to accusations of witchcraft.[1] It is reasonable to infer that the actual number was somewhat larger, for in most such cases the sympathy of the community is on the side of the murderers, and so it becomes a fairly easy matter to conceal the crime.

It appears that in other parts of North India the magician, or *ojha*, is a dealer in "black magic",[2] but among the Santals the order of *ojhas* might almost seem to have been called into being because of the need to defend society against the evil influence and the sorcery of witches who are the enemies of society. The *ojha* is a benefactor of society and seeks to overcome witchcraft by invading the territory of the witches and using their weapons. Each of the opposing camps is prepared to lay hands on any weapon that may serve its purpose.

The same truth is evident in all the Santal's dealings with things that he cannot understand. The attitudes summed up in the terms "magic" and "religion" are both in evidence. It is not usual in these days to distinguish sharply between them.[3] Magic is used by the Santal as a tool to accomplish many and varied ends. It is not absent from his dealings with the spirits, and it can be used for social as well as antisocial ends. It does

[1] S. M. Naqavi, "Santal Murders", an article in *Man in India*, September 1943, Vol. XXIII.

[2] W. Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 423: "In Northern India the worker of black magic is the Ojha, a term derived from the Sanskrit Upâdhâya, 'teacher', and the Syâna, 'cunning man', who follow the traditional methods handed down from their predecessors. Their stock-in-trade is a collection of Mantras or spells, many based on the magic of the Tântras, 'rule, ritual', used in the cult of the Sakti or female energy, by which they are supposed to acquire the power of controlling spirits or demons, and of forcing them to obey the orders of the sorcerer."

[3] Cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1945, p. 72: "Magic for us, though it may not postulate any transcendent reality, is an integral part of primitive religion."

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consequently overlap the sphere of "religion", which, however, covers experiences where the arts of magic do not reach, while magic also works independently in some situations. For the most part, the various approaches to the problems of living are simultaneously pursued, by individuals as well as by society. "Charms" are in almost universal use as a precaution against sickness; one finds the shell of a land tortoise hung in the cowshed to ward off smallpox, or cowrie shells worn as a protection against the evil eye, and amulets worn round the arm as a matter of routine and called *ran*, or medicine. A double attitude is most apparent in efforts to control the weather that plays so great a role in their life. In a period of great drought the Santals probably arrange for a special festival to be held, with sacrifices offered to the "Five". At the same time they busy themselves in other ways which are quite independent of the sacrifice. Unmarried girls plaster the dancing floor with cowdung, while the married women do the same to their own courtyards. An investigation is made as to whether any woman has tied a rope on any roof. It is taboo for women to climb on roofs in the ordinary way, but some of the cowsheds and outbuildings have low roofs on which it would be possible to tie the straw to a rafter without climbing up. If it transpires that any woman has done so, she is made to climb up on to the roof and undo her work, first removing her clothing. Other investigations are made too. It may be that someone has stored dried *matkom* on the floor in her house instead of placing it on a plank or on stones; or it may be that oil has been stored in a sealed pot, in which case the covering must be removed. Underlying all these activities is the conviction that the welfare of society and of the individual depends on establishing a balance between man, nature and the spirit world, and they witness to a faith that such a balance is possible of achievement.